



## Metropolitan Hilarion celebrates liturgy at Skete of St Andrew on Mount Athos

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On October 23, 2010, Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, DECR chairman, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at the Skete of St Andrew on Mount Athos. He was assisted by Archbishop Feognost of Sergiev Posad, Archbishop Antony of Borispol, head of the Commission for Monasteries, Hieromonk Gabriel, rector of Kiev Seminary and Academy, Rev. Ioann Guaita of the DECR, and brethren of the skete. The service was conducted in Greek and Church Slavonic.

After the liturgy, Metropolitan Hilarion addressed himself to Archimandrite Ephrem, this year's head of the skete, with words of greeting, 'Dear Father Ephrem beloved in the Lord, allow me to express on behalf of our delegation on and my own behalf our gratitude for this opportunity to visit this holy community and to celebrate the Divine Liturgy here. It is gratifying to see that this skete, built a century and a half ago through the efforts of Russian monks, is now being restored to its former magnificence. For all who come here, this holy church is a place where they meet with living God. Thank you once again, Father Ephrem, for your hospitality and your leadership in this skete and your concern for its good order and restoration of its ruined or declining buildings'.

As a token of his visit, Metropolitan Hilarion gave to the dikaios a pectoral cross.

During the fraternal repast, Father Ephrem made a speech stressing that it was a great honour for the community of the Skete of St. Andrew that Russian great ascetic Innokenty (Sibiryakov) spent his last years and died at the skete, leaving to the Athonite ascetics a model of utter selflessness and humbleness. 'Holy Rus' remembers and cherish the deeds of his charity. Being one of the richest men of his time, he built many monasteries and sketes with this own money and made rich donations for charity', he said.

The dikaios of the skete said he was glad to hear that the Moscow Patriarchate's commission for canonization considers the canonization of schema-monk Innokenty (Serebryakov). The Skete of St. Andrew keeps the honourable head of Father Innokenty, and the Athonite monks mention his name during the liturgy along with other builders of the skete beginning from Ecumenical Patriarch Athanasius. 'Christ knows of the work and feats of the fathers who died here, and our duty is to honour their honourable relics. It is a spiritual blessing which ties us by the bonds of sacred memory and a reminder that we should emulate them. We hope that with the help of the Most Holy Mother of God we will also do

good works before the Lord', he said.

Metropolitan Hilarion and his delegation visited the vault where the bones of the dead are kept in the skete and said a prayer for the souls of all those who died in it.

On the same day, the Russian Orthodox pilgrims visited the Monastery Xiropotamos, the oldest monastery on Mount Athos. They were welcomed by the abbot, Archimandrite Joseph. The pilgrims venerated the largest surviving piece of the Lord's Cross and other shrines.

*DECR Communication Service*

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